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About 20 officials summoned to testify on deadly Attica blaze



Prosecutors investigating the deadly fires that devastated parts of eastern Attica last July have summoned more than 20 people to testify next week as suspects for actions or omissions that led to the deaths of 99 people.

The crimes investigated include those mentioned in lawsuits filed by the relatives of eight people who perished in the wildfire at Mati: criminal negligence, manslaughter, arson and exposure to danger.

Among others, prosecutor Ilias Zagoraios summoned Attica Regional Governor Rena Dourou – who has also been summoned to testify on the floods in Mandra, western Attica in November 2017, which left 24 dead – Marathon Mayor Ilias Psinakis, Rafina Mayor Evangelos Bournous, former general secretary for civil protection Yiannis Kapakis, former fire service chief Sotiris Terzoudis, former police chief Constantinos Tsouvalas and other high-ranking officers of the police force, fire service and coast guard.

Psinakis is also under investigation by prosecutors for the way in which aid for the fire victims was managed.

One of the lawsuits filed by relatives of the victims was against the ministers of the interior and citizens' protection at the time, Panos Skourletis and Nikos Toskas. Their case has been sent to Parliament for investigation.

The process of summoning suspects is usually a precursor to criminal prosecutions.

Friday's summons were issued almost two months after the opening of an urgent preliminary investigation by Supreme Court prosecutor Xenia Dimitriou in the aftermath of the fire.

Dimitriou had initially requested that the completion of the investigation be held off until a report by the general inspector of public administration, Maria Papaspyrou, had been taken into account. However, she retracted her request following a storm of criticism from the media, the political opposition and the families of the fire victims.

Dimitriou said at the time her request was not aimed at causing delays in the investigation.